

Rubric for the News Analysis Project

Purposes of this project include:

- Practice working in groups
- The opportunity to learn about a current legal issue
- The opportunity to learn about sources of information including the relative value and reliability of various sources
- The opportunity to use business publications

Students will follow a particular topic in agricultural law (or a related area of law) over an 8-10 week period, using the Wall Street Journal and other sources. Students are expected to work in groups of 5 students. Team work is essential in most employment settings. Part of the purpose of this exercise is to practice teamwork. At the end of the project, each project member shall e-mail the instructor with an assessment of their fellow team members. Each group will prepare a final report to present orally to the class in a 5-10 minute presentation. Each oral report shall be accompanied by a 3 page discussion of sources, complete with proper citations. Group members are expected to provide interim reports on an unannounced basis. In summary:

- Thursday, February 4 – topic and group members names due 10 points
- Tuesday, March 30 – written reports due/oral reports begin 20 points
- Unannounced interim reports 20 points
- Team member assessments – due April 20 Instructor discretion
- Details will be provided in the rubric.

TOTAL

50 points

Any student who fails to join a group shall receive no credit for this assignment. Any student who fails to assess all the members of his/her team shall lose 10 points. **Section 601 (internet) students shall conduct the discussion and presentation portions of this assignment through Moodle.**

Late and/or improperly formatted submissions will be accepted at the sole discretion of the instructor, subject to a reduction in points.

The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) was selected as the focus of this project for several reasons. It is recognized as one of the best business publications in the United States. It is one of the few newspapers in the United States that has made the transition from a paper publication to a dual publication, with both print and internet editions. What distinguishes it from

other newspapers with websites is that it has been able to charge for access to its websites. As most of you are aware this is not the case with most other newspaper websites. The depth of information available through wsj.com is one reason that it has been able to do this. For legal matters it provides not only court decisions but the court filings as well. For some judicial decisions and regulatory matters this includes facsimiles of original documents that are exhibits in those proceedings. No other source provides this type of legal information in one place at such a low cost. (There are internet-based, legal databases, used by attorneys, available but their cost is many multiples of the cost of wsj.com.) The WSJ also provides excellent student support – something that is lacking from most other business publications.

While the print edition of the WSJ (in electronic form) is available through the NCSU library, access to wsj.com is not available through the NCSU library. To receive the information behind the stories in the print edition, as well as information not covered in the print edition, students need access to wsj.com. For that reason students are strongly encouraged to subscribe to the WSJ to give them access to wsj.com. To allow students to do this at the lowest possible cost, the WSJ, by special arrangement, has agreed to provide a 10-week student subscription. Longer subscriptions are available. 10-week subscriptions will begin on February 1 to coincide with the class assignment. Longer subscriptions will begin immediately. These options will be discussed thoroughly in class.

Students are encouraged to use other sources of information to supplement information from the WSJ.

The topic

A list of topics will be provided along with a sign-up sheet prior to February 4. Students are encouraged to provide the instructor with topics of interest prior to that date; however, final selection of topics is within the instructor's sole discretion. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to provide topics of interest. The topics will be designed to provide coverage of areas of law not covered in class.

Unannounced interim reports

Group members are expected to be able to provide interim reports on their topic at any time. This simulates a typical employment situation where one may be asked to speak (or write in the case of internet students) about a topic without advance notice.

The written report

This is expected to be a group report with all members contributing.

Factors considered in grading the report:

- Were the instructions in this rubric followed?
- Did the students use standard business grammar and proper spelling?
- Was the report well-integrated? Was the style consistent throughout? Or do styles vary reflecting the styles of different authors? If the latter points will be deducted.
- Originality – were areas of law not discussed in class addressed?
- Were materials used cited and properly used? Was a consistent citation style used throughout? Were quotations appropriate to the paper? Were quotations of excessive length?
- Did the students reach a reasonable conclusion based upon the information presented?
- Did the students evaluate the reliability of the information used? Did the students identify the biases of the sources of information? [Even for a publication such as the WSJ not all information is equal. What were the reporter's sources of information? Many reporters will comment on the reliability, or lack thereof, of their sources in their articles.]

Final oral report

- Did all group members participate?
- Were all members prepared?
- Was the presentation of 5-10 minutes? Points will be deducted for presentations either shorter or longer.
- Were conclusions adequately supported by the evidence?
- Was the presentation updated for current information?
- Did the students discuss the reliability and biases of their information sources?

Team member assessments

Assessing fellow employees either formally (as in a supervisory relationship) or informally is often part of employment. This will be done through one, short e-mail to the instructor that assesses each team member. Assessments will not be shared with other team members. The assessments are designed to help me in assigning grades but will in no way be the primary basis for grades.

Last updated January 4, 2010